

USS *Cimarron*

USS *Cimarron*, whose original spelling was “Cimerone,” was an 860-ton side-wheel “double-ender.” Her reversible engines allowed her to travel equally well forward or backward, a particular advantage when patrolling narrow rivers. She was built in 1862 at Bordertown, New Jersey, outfitted and launched on March 16 at the Philadelphia Navy yard, and commissioned on July 5, carrying a crew of 122 and 10 guns (one 100-lb. muzzle-loading rifle, one nine-inch smoothbore, and eight 24-lb. smoothbore howitzers). Her first assignment was under Maxwell Woodhull, who took command on July 9, 1862. His report of July 9, 1862, to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles on the initial sea trial in Hampton Roads, VA is reprinted below. She then helped support the withdrawal of General McClelland’s army from Harrison’s Landing on the James River during the summer of 1862. Following this assignment *Cimarron* was deployed as the command vessel under Woodhull during the blockade of the St. Johns River and the port of Jacksonville, FL.

Maxwell Woodhull was commander of the *Cimarron* for less than a year. On February 19, 1863, he was killed in Baltimore during the accidental discharge of a gun fired in salute. Buried in Trinity Churchyard, New York, his service and that of his son (who also served in war) is recognized today by one of only two flagpoles in Arlington National Cemetery. Flags on the 90-foot flagpole fly at half-staff, from one-half hour before the first burial service of the day until one-half hour after the last service. Erected in 1924, the inscription of the marble base reads:

**IN MEMORY OF MAXWELL WOODHULL
COMMANDER USN + 1813 - 1863 +
AND OF HIS SON
MAXWELL VANZANDT WOODHULL
BREVET BRIGADIER GENERAL USA
+ 1834 - 1921 +**

On September 7, *Cimarron* was transferred to the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron stationed at Port Royal, South Carolina, as part of the “Flying Squadron” under the command of Commodore Charles Wilkes charged with the capture or sinking of the Confederate commerce raiders *Alabama* and *Florida*. When these two ships made it safely out to sea, *Cimarron* was sent to patrol Wassaw Sound, GA and the entrance to the nearby port of Savannah during the spring and summer of 1863. In the following winter and spring of 1864, *Cimarron* patrolled the South Carolina coast off Charleston, returning to Wassaw in the summer. After repairs during the winter of 1864-5, she aided the Union attack on Charleston until the city surrendered near the end of the war.

While on blockade duty along the Atlantic coast, *Cimarron* captured three vessels or prizes, including the Confederate steamer *Jupiter* on September 13, 1863. She was decommissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on August 8, 1865, and sold on November 6.

Sources: *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ship*, from: <http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/gunboats/cimaron.htm>
Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, vol. 17, pp. 558-559; available at the Cornell Making of America site: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>.
http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org/text/Woodhull_Memorial_Flagstaff_text.html.
Photographs: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-c/cimarron.htm>

U. S. Gunboat *Cimarron*,
Hampton Roads, July 9, 1862.

Sir: I have the honor to report my arrival at this anchorage yesterday at 11 o'clock a. m. and reported to Commander B. J. Totten, the senior officer present, as per orders of Flag-Officer Pendergrast.

Captain Totten having no orders for arriving vessels of war suggested my proceeding with the *Cimarron* up James River and reporting in person to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, who is somewhere in that locality; consequently I shall leave so soon as I can procure a pilot.

The *Cimarron*, as far as regards her hull, is a good model, strong and substantially built; her engine appears good, but her power is not as great as might be desired. We obtained, with a perfectly smooth sea and calm weather, 6 knots. I am led to believe when the engine moves more smoothly she will increase her locomotion 2 or 3 knots an hour. However, as the superintending engineer, Mr. Greer, will represent at the Department the true state of the engine, he will give you more satisfactory particulars about it than I can.

The contractors have failed in many things, and deficiencies are numerous. Her steering gear is a perfect failure; the steamer can scarcely be guided or kept upon a straight course. Mr. Greer can explain the causes of this defect and the manner in which it can be best remedied. I must be excused in saying, I doubt very much if ever a vessel intended for serious war service was sent from a navy yard in such inefficiency. I don't complain, having a good battery, sufficient powder and shot, a young, green, but pliable crew, and good officers, I trust with hard work and constant drill we will soon be ready to render good and telling services. In order to make her what she should be, we have been compelled to make use of the supplies put on board of her as stores.

I desire to inform the Department that I did not avail myself of the three days' leave kindly granted me, as I was desirous of doing all in my power to expedite the *Cimarron* to sea, knowing it to be your wish that she should be dispatched at the earliest moment.

All of which I have the honor to submit to your consideration.

Very respectfully,

M. Woodhull
Commander

Hon. Gideon Welles
Secretary of the Navy, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

Photo # NH 61486 USS Cimarron off Charleston, S.C., during the Civil War

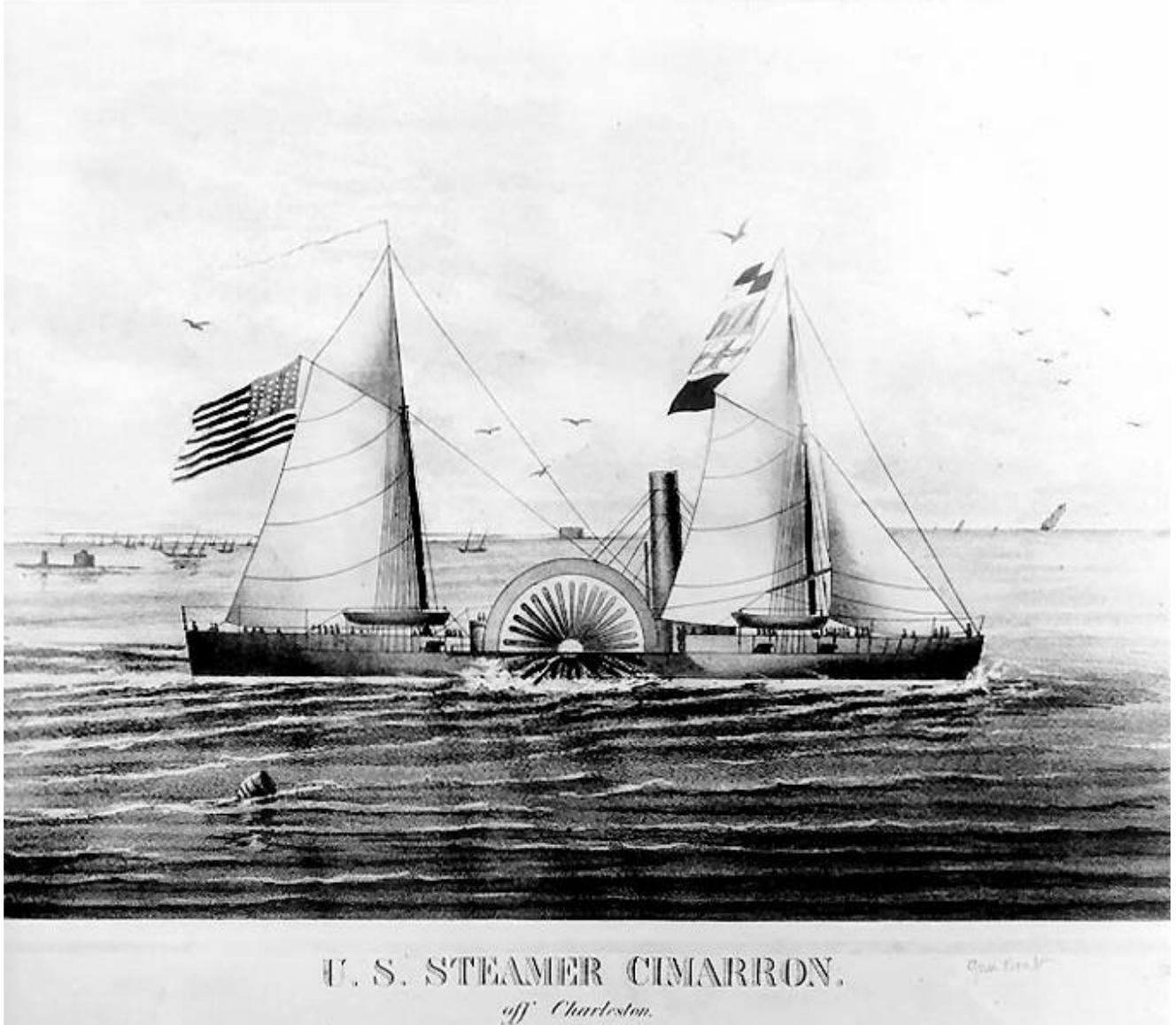
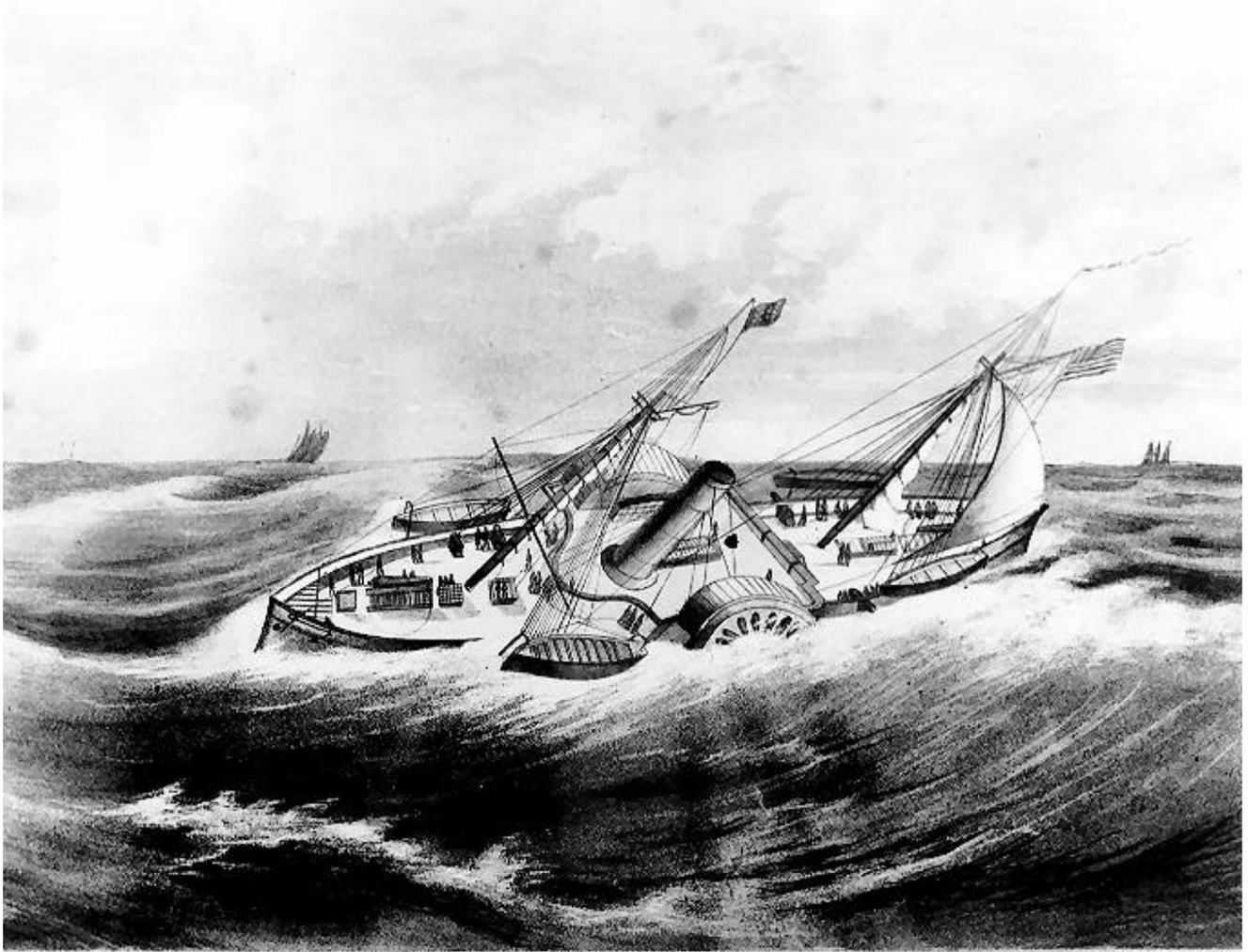


Photo # NH 61485 USS Cimarron off Cape Hatteras during the Civil War



U. S. STEAMER CIMARRON,
off Cape Hatteras

Opp. 112
1861